The Poetics of Anti-Americanism in Greece

Rhetoric, Agency, and Local Meaning

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Abstract: In this article we examine the content and rationale of anti-Americanism in Greece, drawing ethnographic information from two urban centers, Patras and Volos. We pay special attention to the conspiracy theory attributes of this rhetoric, and, instead of dismissing it or seeing it primarily as a manifestation of nationalist thinking, we attempt to unpack the threads of meaning that make it so appealing in local contexts. We look in particular at the etiology of blame within this particular discourse and try to explain the specific readings of history and politics that make it significant in local contexts. We argue that Greek anti-Americanism has an empowering potential for local actors, as it provides them with a certain degree of discursive agency over wider political processes that are beyond their immediate control.

Keywords: anti-Americanism, conspiracy theory, Greece, local actors, nationalism, political agency, rhetoric, Western powers

The citizens of Greece often engage in passionate debates about international politics and the role of the great powers in the larger scheme of historical events. Often in these conversations, the United States is the prime suspect for all kinds of injustice and malfunction in the world system: it is blamed for abusing its power, for intervening unilaterally in the domestic affairs of other sovereign states, and for harming Greece, among other small nations. Local actors in Greece have been noted for their adroitness in articulating arguments that cast the great powers as agents of disaster (Herzfeld 1982, 1992). Their skill in interpreting contemporary events in terms of familiar historical patterns has also been observed (Sutton 1998), as has been the analytical, pointed, and irony-prone disposition of those interpretations (Brown and Theodossopoulos 2000, 2003; Kirtsoglou 2006). All of these characteristics are apparent in the Greek

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version of anti-American discourse, which, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has moved increasingly to the center stage in local-level conversations about the etiology of political events.

In this article we explore some of the key themes of anti-Americanism in Greece and try to shed some light on its rhetorical complexity. Paul Hollander (2005), a major theorist of anti-Americanism, perceives two distinct directions in anti-American rhetoric. The first represents "a direct and rational response to the evident misdeeds of the United States abroad and its shortcomings and inequities at home" (ibid.: 13), while the second emerges as "a largely groundless, irrational predisposition (similar to racism, sexism, or anti-Semitism), an expression of a deeply rooted scapegoating impulse, a disposition more closely related to the problems, frustrations, and deficiencies of those entertaining and articulating it" (ibid.: 15). We are unhappy with Hollander's second explanation of anti-Americanism, which we feel does not do justice to the complexity and intricate meaningfulness of informal political commentary at the local level.

Instead of treating anti-American discourse as a pathology, we prefer an approach that regards anti-Americanism as an ideology that explains "why the world is how it is" and puts forward "a justification for future action" (McPherson 2006: 1). We maintain that by acknowledging the exegetical potential of anti-Americanism, we can better understand its appeal among disenfranchised local actors situated on the periphery of global power. Anti-Americanism may be laden with stereotypes and often relies on deeply nationalist readings of history and political causality. The Greek variation, for example, reproduces nationalist and irredentist claims (Stefanidis 2007). Yet instead of hastily dismissing this discourse as being primarily an expression of nationalist thinking, we prefer to examine its complexity, the historical events that inspire it, and its versatility as an explanatory tool.

Anti-American rhetoric, as in the case of conspiracy theory, is built upon culturally meaningful values and points of view and has an underlying logic hidden within its apparent contradictions (Marcus 1999; Sanders and West 2003). We argue that anti-American discourse also has an empowering dimension, as it furnishes peripheral actors with a certain degree of discursive agency. At the local level, the anti-American critique can provide marginalized local critics with the comfort of being able to discuss greater processes that lie beyond their direct control, and in many cases it can have an emancipatory ideological potential.

This article traces Greek renderings of anti-Americanism as discussed in informal contexts in two urban centers, Patras and Volos, the sites of our ongoing fieldwork—an investigation of Greek political life.[1] We participated in the conversations of our respondents as these occurred spontaneously in the casual settings of everyday life—in shops, cafeterias, buses, taxis, living rooms, kitchens, and backyards. Many local actors in Greece—men, women, youths, and senior citizens—enthusiastically take part in conversations about international politics and, in particular, in discussions about the United States, a topic that has not escaped the attention of ethnographers.[2] Several of the conversations we witnessed came as a response to timely developments—for example,

Western interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan—and were to some degree inspired by anti-American proclivities in the Greek media. Yet our respondents do not see themselves as passive recipients of journalistic reportage (cf. Madianou 2005).[3] On the contrary, most of them do not hesitate to provide their own confident and articulate commentary on wider political processes. In fact, in many cases, the topic of anti-Americanism was introduced into the discussions by our interviewees.

In the sections that follow, we first pay close attention to how our respondents evaluate the United States and its citizens. Then, having described in detail the content and basic characteristics of local Greek perceptions of the US, we proceed to an analysis of the greater socio-political context that makes these views relevant. We also examine how our respondents discuss the local notions of "American ignorance" and "American arrogance" in their rhetorical arguments, as well as the tactics of blame attribution that emerge from the strategic deployment of these notions. Finally, we focus on the expectations that our respondents hold of the US and the Western great powers, which remain unfulfilled, since our respondents believe that the West has not paid off its (perceived) historic debt to Greece. We argue that culturally meaningful ideas like these can help us fully appreciate the particular angle of anti-Americanism in Greece and its appeal as a dynamic and popular discourse.

Talking about America and Americans

A fundamental distinction in our respondents' discourse about the United States involves subtle distinctions with regard to the country's government, its official agents, and its ordinary citizens. The United States, as a nation, is most frequently referred to in everyday conversation as "America" (*i Ameriki*), and its official representatives—politicians, military personnel, and secret agents—are "the Americans" (*oi Amerikanoi*). In fact, in most conversations, the generalizing category "Americans" is reserved in the first instance for the agents of the state, who are normally discussed as critically and as equally unenthusiastically as the state itself. But a second kind of "Americans" may potentially emerge in a conversation, one that refers to the ordinary citizens of the state, the everyday people. In this case, the evaluations of our respondents are more complex and nuanced and can be potentially both negative and positive. Here are two examples:

> I have lived in America and I have seen their positive sides (*ta kala tous*)! They are smiling people, willing to be of service. Unlike me, my cousin, who was a Communist, hated them until he spent some time in their country. He changed his opinion and now spends half the year in America. But he is still a Communist. (A 53-year-old man, a lawyer)

> I do not like the arrogance of powerful states, but the Americans themselves are practical people who try to better themselves. Some go after profit, but others serve the arts and the sciences. (A 45-year-old woman, a civil servant)

In those conversations in which our respondents in Patras and Volos were prepared to comment about "the Americans" in less generalizing terms, they stressed the heterogeneity of the US population, its multi-ethnic origins, and the recent history of that nation (which they contrasted with Greece's presumed ethnic homogeneity and "very long" history).[4] "They are a mosaic of civilizations" (*ena mosaiko politismon*), our respondents stressed. "They have Christian fundamentalists and atheists," "many uneducated people"—that is, "the crowd that is controlled (*kateythinomeno*) by the politicians"—and others who are "intellectuals and artists." Those in this last group can be "intelligent" (*efyeis*) and "pioneers" (*protoporoi*), our respondents acknowledged, unlike the great majority of the population, who are seen as "good-hearted" (*kalokardoi*) but "gullible or naive" (*afeleis*). Even committed Communists with strong anti-American views recognized, in the course of conversations, some humanizing complexity among the range of the United States' population: "They have their good and bad sides (*ta kala tous kai ta kaka tous*). They do well in science, in art, in music; but their politicians are corrupted. Many people in America go daft over their own system (*apovlakonontai*). They do not know much about the dirty politics of their own government."

Despite its condescending connotations, the stereotype of the 'naive American', which emerged in several conversations in Patras and Volos, was often used to relieve everyday US citizens from some of the blame that was usually reserved for the policies of their government. Our Greek respondents, experts in rationalizing responsibility (Herzfeld 1992), sustain very subtle distinctions in the etiology of blame and can empathetically apply their own familiar, blame-evading tactics in their evaluations of others. We must not lose perspective, however, of the patronizing dimensions of this rhetorical strategy. A certain degree of occasional, political leniency toward the ordinary Americans—who are perceived of as unaware of the political reality—represents a more widespread denigrating attitude. Everyday Americans are "clueless" (*adaeis*), our respondents maintain. "They are slap-happy" (*xazoharoumenoi*). "They live permanently in the darkness" (*zoun monima sto skotadi*), having been brought up in such a way that "they don't recognize what is happening (*den xeroun ti pezetai*) in the world."

In most comparisons of this kind, the citizens of the world's most powerful state are portrayed as unaware of the world itself, an evaluation that can inspire satirical comments and jokes that aim toward subverting political power, while at the same time encourage a favorable comparison with the powerless but politically astute European-or-Mediterranean-or-Greek interlocutors of the given conversation. Seen from this point of view, "the Americans" might be the citizens of a powerful nation, but they are, in many respects, and especially in terms of their political awareness, lesser than the peripheral actors of less-privileged nations. "Out of touch" and "apathetic" about what is happening in the world, they are easily "misled" (*paraplanounte*) by their "unscrupulous" (*adistaktoi*) politicians. For many modern Greeks, as Kirtsoglou (2006) has argued in her work on local views on terrorism, it is commonly assumed that the ordinary citizens of a given nation share some responsibility for the political choices of their government. It is therefore considered fair if they are judged accordingly.

> I don't have a fixed opinion about the Americans, but in the last years, my opinion has changed. It all depends on their actions in the world. The everyday Americans are good people, but their politics are threatening to the interests of Greece and those of the smaller nations on earth. (A 60-year-old man, an accountant)

Three Critical Predispositions in Greek Anti-American Discourse

In the discourse of our respondents, generalized, everyday Americans are placed in a fluid category of blame, and the degree of that blame is constantly re-evaluated in local conversation. In most cases, timely developments in the arena of international politics provide opportunities for sharp commentary and inspire new arguments and comparisons, or they are used as evidence to validate previous conclusions. The division of Yugoslavia (Sutton 1998), the Western military intervention in the same country (Brown and Theodossopoulos 2000), the September 11 attacks (Kirtsoglou 2006), and the more recent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2009) have all provided opportunities to assess the role of the United States in international politics with respect to more contextual parameters, but also in generalizing terms.

We have observed three more encompassing and recurring critical predispositions that become evident in such conversations and are used to criticize the people whom our respondents call "the Americans." These involve, first, a perception of US arrogance (seen as emanating from the United States' incontestable power); second, a critique of the interfering attitude of the US in the local affairs of other nations; and, third, a belief that US politics follows an anti-Greek orientation. These three critical directions merge and support each other in particular conversations, providing inspiration for numerous supplementary arguments. For example, and as several of our respondents volunteered to explain, the "big-headedness" of "the Americans," encourages them to see other people as "second-rate" (*parakatianous*), "as little ants that they can step on." In other words, "the Americans" believe that they are "superior" and "treat others as Third World people." This is a symptom of their "arrogance" (*eparsi*), our respondents further explain, which they subsequently demonstrate toward other, "smaller nations" (*stous mikroterous laous*). According to this explanation, arrogance is the result of having power and being able to exercise it. "The Americans," like other powerful nations before them, "have fallen into the trap of power."

"The Americans have the power," many respondents in Patras and Volos emphasized, "and they are putting it into use" (*tin hrisimopioun*). "They are intervening in other people's lives." The politics and moral justification of "intervention" seriously concerned many of our interlocutors, who criticized the assumption that "the Americans" can be the "guardians" (*kidemones*) of "other nations" (*allon laon*) and exercise an authority to interfere for the sake of maintaining the peace. A 45-year-old woman, married and with four children, made clear this concern as follows:

> They think that they can be the rulers of the world. They are the rulers, of course, but the issue is that they take advantage of it in a very deceitful manner (*ypoulo tropo*). For example, they talk about peace, but these are excuses to intervene.

Other informants clarified that the problem is not that "the Americans" interfere, but that they get involved in ways that do not always seem properly justified. Fairness, partiality, and impartiality in this context are assessed according to criteria that are meaningful to the local interlocutors who participate in a given discussion. So while it is said that "the American injustices" (*oi adikies ton Amerikanon*) are many, the examples that matter the most concern American intervention in Greek politics. Other cases of US intervention are often used as corroborating evidence for highlighting this greater feeling of "injustice," which frequently has a more local reference.

As we will further discuss in the following sections, US interference in Greece occurred mainly in the period following World War II, and our respondents were able to introduce particular examples, often relating to events that they experienced themselves, into any given conversation. In the great majority, these American interferences were judged to be harmful to the interests and sovereignty of the Greek nation-state. "They have taken advantage of us," our respondents explained. "History has shown how they act against us in a devious manner."

Some of our respondents treated these observations as indisputable and felt no need to further rationalize their opinion. "The Americans are imperialists," they argued in an emphatic manner, "and American politics always harm Greece." Others, however, were ready to qualify their otherwise critical observations by offering more precise evaluations. "The Americans have done harm," they stressed, "but" this is true "in most cases" or "to different degrees." In some cases, they further clarified, "the Americans" have harmed the interests of Greece "indirectly," for example, "by helping the enemies of Greece."

To a certain degree, these small discrepancies in the accusatory tone of our respondents are influenced by political preferences and affiliations. Most of our respondents would agree with the proposition that anti-Americanism in Greece has a history that is directly or indirectly associated with the political Left. But they also acknowledge that nowadays anti-Americanism in Greece is more widespread than ever, with a popular appeal among supporters of all political parties. "Anti-Americanism is not a left or right political choice, but a national one," a 40-year-old saleswoman explained. A 35-year-old man, a computer technician, added in a similar but slightly more rhetorical tone: "Anti-Americanism in Greece is not a left or right direction. It is a human reaction … Everybody can see the game of the Americans."

From this point of view, a critical predisposition toward the United States and its politics is not directly, and not always, related to party politics and commitment to already circumscribed ideological predilections. Some of our most dispassionate and cool-headed respondents described anti-Americanism as "the latest fashion" or as a rhetoric that the non-leftists have borrowed from the leftists, appropriating its populist potential. A few respondents—among

them some leftists—attributed extreme anti-Americanism to the extreme Right, an attitude that they compared to the more systematically articulated anti-Americanism of the Left. "The extreme Right is far worse," they explained. "They are even more anti-American … and for the wrong reasons."

Finally, reflecting upon the degree and magnitude of the growing anti-American attitudes in Greece, our respondents in Patras and Volos made their own self-evaluation. Greece is definitely an anti-American nation, they admitted, but the Greeks are not necessarily more anti-American than many other people (*apo tous allous laous*). Maybe they are more critical toward "the Americans" than other Europeans, we were told, but there are "other nations that hate the Americans more than the Greeks." Meanwhile, we should not forget, as two or three informants suggested, "that there are many Greeks who live in America."

"I think we are more normal anti-Americanists than other anti-Americanists," said a 25-year-old music instructor, reflecting upon what for him is a familiar and culturally meaningful type of anti-Americanism. We will present some of the historically constituted rational for this form of anti-Americanism in the section that follows. For now we conclude with the words of a 50-year-old primary school teacher, a woman with more of a progressive, but not explicitly leftist, political orientation:

> The Greeks criticize the Americans all the time, but most imitate the American way of life, in many respects, and without discretion (*diakrisi*). They pretend to be anti-American to show off, to appear cultured and different (*gia figura*, *gia koultoura*, *gia diaforetitikotita*), but all this is pretentious (*ola auta omos einai dithen*).

The West and Its Debt

Anti-Americanism—or the existence of anti-American discourses—is certainly not an exclusively Greek phenomenon. The political legacy of the Cold War and recent developments related to the "war on terrorism" have led people from all around the world to question the sincerity of US policies (cf. Kirtsoglou 2006; Marcus 1999). In an attempt to explain anti-Americanism, Said (2001: 45) argues that such a political stance is the result of "a series of historical interventions and inhuman policies coldly exercised by the US." Referring to various types of anti-Americanism found in Europe, Spiro (1988: 120) concludes that anti-Americanism consists not of opposition to particular policies but of "persistent patterns of gross criticism of the main values of the U.S. Constitution." The question as to whether or not Greek anti-Americanism is political (originating from opposition to specific policies) rather than cultural (inspired by an opposition to US cultural values in general), as Veremis (2003) would argue, does not have, we feel, a clear-cut answer. The historical contextualization of Greek anti-US feelings supports both possibilities. This is why it will be necessary to examine carefully both the history of the relations between Greece and the Western powers and the history of Greece itself (in socio-cultural terms)

in order to do justice to the spectrum of the various and sometimes conflicting views of our informants.

As we have already mentioned, in the period following World War II, anti-Western attitudes in Greece were rather limited to the political Left (see also Stefanidis 2007: 169). The bitter civil war between leftists and rightists that broke out in response to the power vacuum left by the departing German forces at the end of the war culminated in favor of the rightist government forces, which were crucially empowered by British and American aid (Clogg 1992: 141–142). The British forces, led by Lieutenant-General Ronald Scobie, ended the Communist military control of Athens in 1944, and the US (following the 1947 Truman Doctrine) consistently prevented Greece from falling under the influence of the Soviet Union (cf. Stefanidis 2007: 169). The Marshall Plan evoked the sympathy of the Greek people, who had ultimately committed themselves to the West, despite the fact that the Left was no insignificant part of Greek society (cf. Argyrou 2002: 100–101; Clogg 1992: 179, 181; Kirtsoglou 2006).[5]

One explanation of the widespread Greek anti-Americanism of today is thus related to an account of how the deep-seated belief that "Greece belongs to the West" gradually gave way to the conviction that Greece pays homage to the Western powers. The strategic position of Greece in the Cold War years meant that foreign intervention constituted "not an exception but a consistent pattern in Greece's relationship with the West" (Sutton 2003: 197; cf. Clogg 1992: 146–171; Nachmani 1990; Samatas 1986: 15). American aid in the 1950s was accompanied by a certain degree of political control that, in the consciousness of the general public, culminated in the alleged support offered by the US government and its NATO allies to the military junta that established itself in Greece in April 1967. A careful, historical study of US-Greek relations from the 1950s onward, however, reveals that while US interference can be documented in certain circumstances, in others it cannot (cf. Clogg 1992: 147, 155). The US government, led by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, did nothing more than condemn the Greek military regime of 1967 to 1974, while, as Stefanidis (2007) pointedly observes, from 1953 onward, Greek political forces themselves often invited foreign intervention.

Stefanidis (2007) is certainly right to claim that American omnipotence is a myth. The US is certainly not the puppeteer of all Greek political developments that have taken place since 1945. The image of American all-powerfulness, "despite the fact that it contains elements of truth, more often than not operates in an oversimplifying manner as an alibi for actions and omissions of political agents inside Greece."[6] Anti-Americanism in Greece has been consistently put to use and reinforced by parties and individuals for reasons of political convenience (Kirtsoglou 2006). It could be argued—and we will return to this claim later on—that discourses in which the US is blamed for almost all ailments of contemporary Greek history can be partly explained as narratives of opposition (Stewart and Strathern 2002) that detract attention from the Greece's own internal failures and weaknesses (see also Clogg 1992; Herzfeld 1992). Greek politicians across the political spectrum have systematically abdicated

their personal responsibilities and have assigned failures to the machinations of dark external forces, while simultaneously taking advantage of international crises to create internal polarization and safeguard their political survival (see Clogg 1992: 182; Kirtsoglou 2006: 70).

At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that during the Cold War period, the US benefited from political developments in Greece, including that of the military regime (see Stefanidis 2007: 176), and clearly prioritized political control over concerns about democracy, civil rights, transparency, and equality. Greek attitudes toward the US and the Western powers in general can therefore be seen as having been molded by the wider political environment of the Cold War era, which has undeniably shaped contemporary Greek historical consciousness (cf. Herzfeld 1992; Loizos 1981). "America"—as our informants like to call the US—has been indeed the hegemonic power that, up to a degree, steered local and international history (cf. Brown and Theodossopoulos 2003: 321–322; Clogg 1992: 150–171; Sutton 2003: 201) and kept reminding Greece, often in painful ways, of its "relative lack of power and the realities of colonial and post-colonial world politics" (Sutton 2003: 197).

Considering that, in the period after World War II, anti- or pro-Americanism was mostly a matter of left- or right-wing affiliation, respectively, it is worth turning our attention to what is seen by both scholars and local-level actors as the turning point for the relations between Greece and the US: the failure of the US and the Western powers in general to support Greece and Cyprus since 1954. In order to account concisely for the events between 1954 and 1974 in an analytically rich manner, we will explore and follow in the first instance Stefanidis's compelling argument that Greek anti-Americanism relates in fact to irredentism and nationalism. Without totally rejecting this claim, we will subsequently try to enrich the analysis by maintaining that nationalism and irredentism need themselves to be explained and contextualized before they can provide sufficient explanations for other attitudes.

Bringing together ample evidence, Stefanidis (2007: 190) manages to show that the US attitude toward Greek politics in general—and the demand for unification with Cyprus in particular—"collided with the irredentist core of Greek political culture," thus engendering "a surge of anti-Americanism that proved nearly impossible to quell." Indeed, the United States' refusal to support the unification of Cyprus with Greece and, later, to prevent or reverse the effects of Turkish military intervention on that island alienated the Greek public to a great extent and obliterated dividing lines between the Right and the Left. Stefanidis provides us with one of the most eloquent articulations of Greek feelings at the time as expressed by Psathas, a regular columnist in the newspaper *Ta Nea*. Reflecting on the tension of the 1964 period and the bombardment of the area of Tilliria in Cyprus by Turkish planes, Psathas comments that "the soul of every Greek revolted … 'inside this iron ring of hostility and cynicism' where Greece found herself ensnared by her 'great allies'" (ibid.: 233). Psathas regrets the fact that Greece had ever "subscribed to the 'deceitful principles of NATO,'" commenting that "the attack had come, not 'from the north,[7] but from the barbarians from the East who harbour an age-old hatred against us'" (ibid.).

The Greek and the Greek Cypriot view of what was right and justified was indeed guided by irredentist considerations and a firmly established belief that the West owes to Greece (and Cyprus, as part of the Greek culture) not only a "repayment" for its allegiance during the two world wars, but also—and perhaps more importantly—the very existence of Western culture, both practically and symbolically. The debt is owed symbolically because classical Greece is seen, according to this line of thinking, as the "cradle of Western civilization" (*likno tou Dytikou politismou*). It is owed practically because the Greeks perceive themselves as having always played the part of the bulwark against the "barbarians" who came from the East at various points in time (Stefanidis 2007: 110–123).[8] In turn, in Greek consciousness, Western betrayal is also a recurrent phenomenon since the time of the Crusades and the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.

Considering the above, Stefanidis (2007) is accurate in his reading of Greek anti-Americanism as a phenomenon that originates in irredentism and in nationalism. Yet we have good reason to point to some additional complexity. Present-day history is read by the Greek public in terms of past history. It is dynamically interpreted and reinterpreted in a never-ending interplay of narratives that feed on each other and solidify identities, attitudes, feelings, and processes of political causality (see Sutton 1998). For this reason, it is important to examine carefully the context and content of nationalism, as well as other possible sources of anti-American discourses. In the section that follows, we will attempt a reconsideration of Greek anti-Americanism in terms of a search for local meaning and what we call an expectation of 'political consistency'.

When the West Does Not Keep Its Side of the Bargain

In an article that explores anti-Americanism in Turkey, Criss (2002: 475) explains how the US position on the Cyprus issue has alienated the Turkish public, posing questions of allegiance to NATO and raising issues concerning national Turkish sovereignty. For the puzzled reader—who might expect that if Greece is dissatisfied with the US stance in a Greco-Turkish dispute, then Turkey should be satisfied—we need to explain why the two countries had the same expectation, namely, that the US had (and ought to have) the role of the defender of international justice. Stefanidis (2007: 190) explains this as being partly related to local Greek opinion makers and partly to American rhetoric and propaganda. The introduction of Turkey adds, of course, an awkward complication to the first part of this argument. If it is Greek opinion makers who are responsible for the perception of the US as an international 'trustee' of peace, democracy, and political justice, then we need to assume that Turkish opinion makers followed a similar strategy. And of course we then need to explain the similarity.

At this point, it is easier, we think, if we rely more on Stefanidis's second explanation, namely, American rhetoric itself. Considering the US role in international politics during the Cold War and afterward, we believe that we can safely point to the presence of a hegemonic global empire that exports and imposes

ideologies and policies alike in various parts of the world (Stewart-Harawira 2005). In countries on the periphery of power, it is not just the local actors' perception that the US is the regulator (up to a certain extent) of international developments. The US presents itself as such, claims this role for itself, and has acted upon it, often entirely unilaterally and on more than one occasion.

Undeniably, local politicians transfer responsibilities to 'external' forces. Andreas Papandreou, one of the greatest political figures in post–World War II Greece and the prime minister of the country for almost 20 years, used anti-Americanism in a rather populist and reactionary manner and as a panacea for nearly every internal problem in Greece (cf. Veremis 2003). Papandreou was among the first people who publicly spoke of Greece as a satellite country to the Western powers[9] and compared the relations between Greece and the US to those between Czechoslovakia and the USSR (Couloumbis 1974). Papandreou's anti-American discourse marked more than one generation of Greek citizens and cultivated an idiosyncratic type of Greek nationalism that is nowadays defended, even by those who 20 years ago were Papandreou's political rivals. It capitalized upon the populist notion that "Greece belongs to the Greeks," a slogan that encapsulated popular dissatisfaction with NATO, the EU, the US, and the Western powers in general, in a country that, paradoxically, at the same time was fighting hard to achieve accession to the EU, to gain US favoritism, and to acquire a strong role in NATO.

Greece committed itself to the West (partly by writing off a substantial part of its leftist population, who were exiled or lived as outlaws until 1974) in the hope that it would be an equal signatory to a group of nations that shared the same principles of democracy, fairness, transparency, and national sovereignty. Greek dissatisfaction with the US today stems, to a great extent, from the realization that this hope might have been just wishful thinking. Given that the entire Cold War politics was about an ultimate, collective, and historic task that led the US and the Western powers in general to prioritize systematically political ends over means, such feelings of dissatisfaction do not seem entirely unreasonable. The record of Greek-American relations, the history of the United States' relations with other countries, and the realpolitik since World War II in general seriously question how self-evident the principles of 'Western civilization' (broadly speaking) are nowadays. In this context, the Greek people certainly feel frustrated—to say the least—by the attitude of their 'traditional allies', who are regarded as having committed a kind of treason by not keeping to their end of the bargain.

"In all its modern history," many of our respondents emphatically state, "Greece has fought side by side with the Western powers, but we have never gained anything in return." What is seen as a lack of support for Greece in relation to Turkey, over the events in Cyprus, or in the more recent dispute about the naming of Macedonia poses to our respondents a problem of political consistency. The US intervenes in Yugoslavia in favor of the Kossovars, but leaves Turkey untouched when it comes to the Kurds. Greece, the United States' traditional ally, is not supported adequately in the case of Cyprus. Turkey, which did not fight on the side of the British and the Americans in World War II, is

perceived as having gained more than Greece in the post-war era. The US recognizes the use of the name 'Macedonia' by a neighboring state, showing disrespect, not only to what is seen by the overwhelming majority of Greeks as part of an indisputable Greek history, but also, and more importantly, to the very cultural heritage of the West as a whole, which is heavily based on the ideals of classical Greece. Greek anti-Americanism and discontent with the Western powers in general cannot therefore be adequately explained outside of indigenous perceptions of history and what constitutes, in the eyes of our respondents, political and historical consistency. As we argue in the remainder of this article, anti-Americanism in Greece relates to historical expectations about what constitutes alliance and allegiance and, ultimately, to the very need of the social actor to exercise political agency in a world that is governed by entities far greater and far more powerful than the Self.

Ignorance, Arrogance, and Allegiance

A widely recognizable slang term for 'naive' in colloquial Greek is *amerikanaki* (diminutive of 'American').[10] Our informants often boast that they are not *amerikanakia* (plural), that is, they were not born yesterday and cannot be easily fooled "like the American people." The latter are, in turn, constructed in the local imagination as living not merely in ignorance but in a kind of staged reality that is manufactured by the media (e.g., CNN) and sustained by American politicians, who are mostly puppets of big corporations (or capitalism in general) and of the CIA. As we explained in the previous sections, the distinction that our informants make between "America" (as a nation) and "the Americans" (as individual people) suggests some empathy toward everyday people imagined as the Self. This kind of empathy extends even to the people of powerful nations and is itself a kind of exegetical tool that serves partly to justify why the realpolitik proves to be so different from indigenous perceptions of justice. Imagining the Other as powerless—through ignorance this time—provides some justification for what our respondents see as a lack of resistance to power or the failure to engage with injustice in world politics.

In everyday conversation, the above view is usually put forward with examples. A popular one refers to the NATO airstrikes on Yugoslavia in 1999, which, according to the prevailing sense of justice of many in Greece, should have never happened (see Brown and Theodossopoulos 2000, 2003). Nevertheless, it did, and the American public was not able to resist, since, our respondents argue, "the Americans" were misled by politicians and the media on the particulars of the situation. The introduction here of an argument that highlights the "false political consciousness" of the public in the United States—apart from humanizing, so to speak, the target audience—also provides a means of never adequately questioning the Self's perceptions of justice, historical causality, and political fairness. According to this logic, if the Others do not act in a manner that appears to agree with the Self, this is not because every coin might have two sides, but because the Others simply do not know the truth. Conspiracy theory

scenarios do not, then, involve only Greece and the smaller nations. They can apply equally well to the US and its people, thus accounting for all kinds of paradoxes and providing meaning, coherence, and continuity in local discourse.

An important feature of the post–World War II political scene in Greece was the existence of a semi-legal state apparatus, the *parakratos*—the para-governmental network or "parastate," as Clogg (1992: 157) translates it (cf. Kirtsoglou 2006: 69). Associated with the most conservative forces within Greece, the *parakratos* was considered responsible for a number of events that eventually led to the establishment of the 1967 dictatorship in Greece. Familiar historical patterns inspire Greek citizens' understanding of unfamiliar settings (Sutton 1998), and thus the CIA is imagined very much as the US equivalent of the *parakratos*, driving American political life and exercising overt or covert control over local politicians. The belief in dark capitalist centers and the power of agencies like the CIA provides local actors with a familiar metaphor—a fine example of what Sutton (1998) describes as analogical thinking—to explain "American" ignorance.

Thus, in terms of the discourse described so far, ignorance is a strong exegetical tool. However, it is not always easily applicable and does not always absolve entirely US citizens from their share of blame. After all, in spite of their ignorance, they represent what is seen as the earth's most powerful nation. "The Americans" are therefore portrayed sometimes as being responsible en masse for the misdeeds of their nation. The idea of collective responsibility (and in particular collective political responsibility) is tied to the concept of the nation as an 'imagined community' engaged in "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (Anderson 1983: 26). The nation—very much conceptualized in terms of kinship (Sutton 1998)—is deemed collectively accountable for the actions of its representatives.[11] In this respect, the American people share the arrogance of their leaders.

According to our respondents in Greece, US arrogance is demonstrated through acts of intervention in the affairs of smaller nations, unilateralism, and systematic attempts toward polarization of the international political community. While other nations in the world, such as Greece, have committed themselves to the West, genuinely believing in the superiority of democracy and equality as ideals of political organization, the US behaves as if it were an empire. The resulting world order is, in effect, as our informants emphatically state, alluding to the Roman Empire, a *Pax Americana*. Whereas consensus is the ultimate criterion of legitimacy in modern Western societies (Scruton 2002: 8), the United States' political unilateralism and flamboyant exhibition of power make many Greek local actors feel that the social contract, as a principle of Western post-Enlightenment organization, is constantly being violated (Kirtsoglou 2006: 79).

Attempts to divide the world between 'us' and 'them', the differential standards employed in political decisions, and concepts such as that of international security and terrorism are all seen by our informants as mere excuses that cast some nations outside the 'protection' of the rules of justice (Frey and Morris 1991: 9–10). Traditional allies of the Western powers—like Greece—thus find themselves in the middle of critical political games, forced to support formally actions (such as the war in Iraq) with which they otherwise disagree.

The ideals of democracy, justice, and the equality of the nations are regarded as having been practically abandoned, while Greece and other less powerful allies of the US are perceived as having been transformed into satellite states in the new world order imperium of the present.

Apart from the violation of significant Western ideals of political organization, such as consensus and equality, the local perception of US arrogance relates to the denigration of another important concept, that of allegiance. It does so in a rather complex manner. The Greeks have always imagined themselves to be allies, not satellites, of the Western powers. As many anthropologists have persuasively explained, the Greek people collectively feel that classical Greek culture is the cradle and bedrock of Western civilization (see, e.g., Herzfeld 1987). The Western world is therefore seen as being naturally allied to Greece, because Greece, in the political consciousness of the indigenous actors, represents its very cultural heritage. Despite the undisputable fact that Greek politics is allied to the West, many local actors in Greece do not feel themselves to be equal members of the Western powers. As Herzfeld (1987: 3) has noted, they "seriously and frequently ask themselves if perhaps they now belong politically, economically, and culturally to the Third World."

This attitude of disrespect displayed by the Western powers is seen by many local actors in Greece as another type of treason. Even if there is no equality in the world, even if the principles of Western political organization have proved to be a kind of "foundation myth" (Gellner 1995: 62), the Western powers *ought* to treat the Greeks as their respectful ally in recognition of their cultural heritage and of what they have offered to the world. Therefore, even if we ultimately accept that we all live in an unjust world, many local Greek actors feel that Greece should not have to suffer the consequences of injustice because of its historical contributions, its adamant commitment to the West, and the sacrifices that the country has made in its modern history. It is in the context of the last that Stefanidis's (2007) argument can be constructively expanded. Greek nationalism and irredentism do inform the expectations of the Greek public, and the Greek version of anti-Americanism definitely relates to the fact that the US has not sufficiently supported Greek irredentist claims. However, what can help us fully appreciate Greek anti-American discourse is the expectation of many in Greece that the US *ought* to show support for these claims—and it has not.

Conclusion: Anti-Americanism as a Context for Political Agency

The ignorance of US citizens, the arrogance of the US as a nation-state, and the sense of betrayal by a more powerful ally are all important dimensions of Greek anti-American discourse. Precisely because of its resonance with locally accepted versions of history, and the related perceptions of historical and political causality, anti-Americanism is definitely an empowering discourse. It is empowering to those who use it, not only because of its populist appeal, but also because of its potential for exercising a certain degree of discursive agency. When local-level actors weave anti-American arguments, however

conspiratorial or nationalist these might sound, they demonstrate their capacity at least to understand the truth, even when they cannot influence outcomes. They might be the 'pariahs' of the new world order, but through the pointed character of their anti-American critique, they demonstrate that at least they are not naive, apolitical 'young Americans' (*Amerikanakia*).

Our respondents in Greece acknowledge that they might not have real political power, but they strongly believe that they understand how political power works. The power of understanding—the power of knowledge, as Foucault (1980) would have called it—compensates for the lack of actual, hands-on power to influence political developments. It is from this circuitous but easily realized position of argumentative authority that local actors in peripheral contexts generate their anti-American rhetoric. Undeniably, anti-Americanism in Greece, as Stefanidis (2007) has claimed, closely relates and reproduces Greek nationalist and irredentist claims. We have demonstrated in this article that it also has something important to reveal about the search for meaning and consistency in political life, that is, the desire of peripheral actors to exercise some form of agency over the greater political processes that surround them. From the local point of view, this agency is comforting and, to a significant degree, empowering, even if its power and appeal are only discursive.

The modern Greek state is in many respects the by-product of a specific historical development and the desire of the nineteenth-century great powers for this state to exist. Based on the notion of an enduring continuity from classical to modern Greece, its history and identity are themselves ideas cultivated first and foremost by European Romanticism. In some respects, Greece was led to believe that it belongs to the West and that it is the natural ally of the Western, Christian great powers. It is precisely this inconsistency that most of our informants struggle to comprehend. The West has always desired Greece to be a part of it and has always acknowledged the West's affinity with the ancient Greek past. But at the same time, the Western powers have consistently denied Greece its equal political status and an equal share in the privileged position of determining the world's affairs.

In the context of the Greek anti-American discourse, the inconsistency we have described above is sometimes explained away, at times through partially empathetic arguments that highlight the 'ignorance' and the misguided nature of the US political consciousness; other times through conspiracy theory scenarios that blame capitalist forces or secret governmental agencies; and sometimes in terms of the Western powers' arrogance and their failure to uphold the principles of post-Enlightenment political organization. More importantly, however, a particular—analogical (Sutton 1998)—reading of history that is culturally meaningful to many in Greece depicts the United States as a nation that has betrayed its own allies, the ideals of the social contract, and, ultimately, the very culture that originated from the same classical ideals. As we have argued in this article, anti-Americanism in this respect can be seen as a quest for meaning and consistency, as well as a context for engendering political agency. For in a world without meaning and consistency, the only power left to the local actor is that of understanding.

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Notes

1. See Brown and Theodossopoulos (2000, 2003), Kirtsoglou (2007), Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos (2009), and Theodossopoulos (2004, 2007b).
2. See, among many, Herzfeld (1987, 1992, 1997), Kirstoglou and Theodossopoulos (2009), Loizos (1981), and Sutton (1998).
3. Research on this topic indicates that Greek audiences approach the discourse of the media critically, contesting versions of banal nationalism in the news and drawing inspiration from personal experiences that help them formulate alternative arguments (Madianou 2005).
4. The United States, whose constitution was ratified in 1788, has a longer history as an independent nation-state than Greece, whose sovereignty was confirmed in a London Protocol in 1830. However, for most Greeks the history of their nation starts in antiquity and is considered to have followed an uninterrupted and continuous course since then. See Herzfeld (1987), Just (1989), Stewart (1994), Theodossopoulos (2007a).
5. The post–World War II legacy is still a dimension of lay analysis of Greek anti-Americanism. Despite the fact that the right- and left-wing distinctions (with respect to attitudes toward the US) are not that evident anymore, in the consciousness of many people (especially older informants), anti-Americanism is often viewed as a predominantly leftist discourse.
6. Extract of a 2006 interview with Stefanidis in the Greek newspaper *Ta Nea* (our translation).
7. Although Stefanidis, who provides us with this excellent quotation, does not clarify what Psathas means by 'north', we can safely assume that the columnist is referring here to the countries on the northern borders of Greece (Bulgaria and Yugoslavia at the time), which were part of the Soviet bloc and from which NATO was supposed to protect the country.
8. Of course, this line of thought is itself established in the belief that there is a continuous and unbreakable historical line between classical and modern Greece through

the Byzantine Empire. For more about this particular thought, see the work of several anthropologists, including Brown and Hamilakis (2003a), Faubion (1993), Herzfeld (1987, 1997), Hirschon (2000), Just (1989), Karakasidou (1997), Stewart (1994), Sutton (1998), Theodossopulos (2007a), and Yalouri (2001).

9. Communist supporters also expressed similar opinions, but the KKE (Communist Party of Greece) was not legal until 1974. Thus, Papandreou's statement was of particular value since it was coming from an 'official' politician and not just the representative of a discriminated and outlawed party.
10. A derivative of the same term, very popular in the last decade, is *americaniá*, which refers to a pattern of behavior aspiring to, or reminiscent of, US patterns of consumption and lifestyle.
11. This is, of course, not some pre-modern and archaic element, but an idea consistently cultivated in the context of the modern nation-state. For more on this issue, see Kirtsoglou (2006: 71–72).

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